

Message Text

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ORIGIN HA-05

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:SHUM, TH

SUBJECT:RESPONSE TO NEWS ARTICLE ON AMERASIAN CHILDREN

1. FOLLOWING IS PROPOSED TEXT OF LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE BANGKOK NATION IN RESPONSE TO JANUARY 24 ARTICLE REFERRING TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN'S VISIT AND PRESS CONFERENCE, WHICH WAS SENT TO DEPARTMENT BY CONSUL GENERAL ANTIPPAS.

2. SUBJECT TO EMBASSY'S VIEWS WE RECOMMEND LETTER BE GIVEN TO THE NATION FOR PUBLICATION IN RESPONSE TO THE ARTICLE. WE WOULD WELCOME EMBASSY'S SUGGESTIONS FOR REVISIONS TO STRENGTHEN TEXT (PARTICULARLY IF MORE CAN BE SAID ON THE AMERASIAN CHILDREN PROBLEM), AND REQUEST SUCH REVISIONS BE SENT TO DEPARTMENT (ATTENTION HA) BEFORE LETTER IS SUBMITTED
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FOR PUBLICATION.

3. BEGIN TEXT: ONE OF YOUR READERS SENT ME THE ARTICLE BY TERMSAK C. PALANUPAP (THE NATION, 24 JANUARY 1978) WHICH IMPLIED THAT THE AMERICAN CONCERN ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS DOES NOT EXTEND TO THE STATUS OF AMERASIAN CHILDREN IN THAILAND. THE ARTICLE REPORTED THAT WHEN I VISITED THAILAND IN JANUARY

I SAID THAT I "HAD NEVER HEARD OF THIS PROBLEM."

I REGRET MR. PALANUPAP CAME AWAY WITH THIS IMPRESSION, BECAUSE IN FACT I CARE DEEPLY ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF THE CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK BETWEEN THAI WOMEN AND AMERICAN SOLDIERS. UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN I WAS ASKED ABOUT THIS AT A LATE EVENING PRESS CONFERENCE JUST BEFORE MY DEPARTURE, I DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION, BECAUSE I WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE TERM "AMERASIAN." I DO NOT THINK OF "ASIA" AS A SINGLE ENTITY, AND HAD THE QUESTIONER ASKED ABOUT THAI CHILDREN WITH AMERICAN FATHERS I WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD AT ONCE WHAT WAS MEANT. IT IS A PROBLEM THAT CONCERNS ME BOTH OFFICIALLY AND ON A PERSONAL LEVEL.

IN THIS REGARD I WAS GLAD TO NOTE THAT THE THAI JUDICIAL COUNCIL HAS REVERSED THE DECEMBER 1972 ANNOUNCEMENT NO. 337 WHICH DEPRIVED SUCH CHILDREN OF THEIR THAI NATIONALITY. ALTHOUGH THIS OF ITSELF DOES NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHILDREN WITHIN THEIR SOCIETY, IT DOES AT LEAST RESTORE THEM TO A RECOGNIZED CIVIL STATUS. I RECOGNIZE THAT THIS SUBJECT IS A DIFFICULT ONE FOR THAILAND, AND FOR OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES, SUCH AS THE PHILIPPINES AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA. MANY AMERICANS HAVE COMMUNICATED TO ME THEIR DESIRE TO HELP THESE CHILDREN THROUGH PRIVATE AGENCY CHANNELS. ADOPTIONS HAVE BEEN ARRANGED IN SOME CASES. BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE. ON THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PERSONAL LEVEL I HAVE EXPRESSED MY SUPPORT FOR THE WORK OF THE PEARL S. BUCK FOUNDATION, WHICH HAS TAKEN THE LEAD TO HELP MIXED-BLOOD CHILDREN. I SUPPORT THE FOUNDATION'S PROPOSAL THAT THIS SUBJECT RECEIVE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION DURING THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD (1979) SPONSORED BY THE UNITED NATIONS.

MAY I ADD THAT I GREATLY APPRECIATED THE HOSPITALITY AND COURTESY WITH WHICH I WAS RECEIVED IN THAILAND, BY SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND BY ORDINARY CITIZENS. IN MY MEETINGS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER, I EXPRESSED OUR GOVERNMENT'S APPRECIATION FOR THAILAND'S HUMANITARIAN POLICIES TOWARD THE MANY REFUGEES FROM INDOSIA NOW IN TEMPORARY CAMPS. THE UNITED STATES HAS ALREADY ACCEPTED OVER 150,000 REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM, LAOS AND CAMBODIA, AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO ACCEPT MORE. THIS IS A PROBLEM FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD COMMUNITY, NOT FOR THAILAND ALONE, OR FOR OTHER COUNTRIES OF THE AREA. BECAUSE OF ITS LOCATION THAILAND IS THE COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM FOR MANY OF THE REFUGEES. THE UNHCR WORKING WITH PRIVATE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IS HELPING FIND PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFUGEES IN WESTERN EUROPE,

NORTH AMERICA, AUSTRALIA, AND ELSEWHERE. BUT UNLESS THE
REFUGEES HAVE A PLACE TO GO FIRST, THEY WILL LOSE THEIR
MOST BASIC HUMAN RIGHT -- THEIR OWN LIVES.

AMERASIAN CHILDREN AND INDOCHINESE REFUGEES ARE BOTH
HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS THAT CONCERN THAILAND AND THE UNITED
STATES. I HOPE OUR COUNTRIES WILL CONTINUE TO WORK TO-
GETHER TO HELP RESOLVE THEM.

PATRICIA M. DERIAN. END TEXT. CHRISTOPHER

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